

II of the bill, which limits actions against suppliers of materials used in devices implanted in the body. In general, title II is a laudable attempt to ensure the supply of materials needed to make life-saving medical devices, such as artificial heart valves. But as I believe even many supporters of the bill agree, a supplier of materials who knew or should have known that the materials, as implanted, would cause injury should not receive any protection from suit. Title II's protections must be clearly limited to nonnegligent suppliers.

My opposition to these Senate-passed provisions were known prior to the Conference on the bill. But instead of addressing these issues, the Conference Committee took several steps backward in the direction of the bill approved by the House.

First, the Conference Report seems to expand the scope of the bill, inappropriately applying the limits on punitive and non-economic damages to lawsuits, where, for example, a gun dealer has knowingly sold a gun to a convicted felon or a bar owner has knowingly served a drink to an obviously inebriated customer. I believe that such suits should go forward unhindered. Some in the Congress have argued that the change made in Conference is technical in nature, so that the bill still exempts these actions. But I do not read the change in this way—and in any event, I do not believe that a victim of a drunk driver should have to argue in court about this matter. The Congress should not have made this last-minute change, creating this unfortunate ambiguity, in the scope of the bill.

In addition, the Conference Report makes certain changes that, though sounding technical, may cut off a victim's ability to sue a negligent manufacturer. The Report deletes a provision that would have stopped the statute of limitations from running when a bankruptcy court issues the automatic stay that prevents suits from being filed during bankruptcy proceedings. The effect of this seemingly legalistic change will be that some persons harmed by companies that have entered bankruptcy proceedings (as makers of defective products often do) will lose any meaningful opportunity to bring valid claims.

Similarly, the Conference Report reduces the statute of repose to 15 years (and less if States so provide) and applies the statute to a wider range of goods, including handguns. This change, which bars a suit against a maker of an older product even if that product has just caused injury, also will preclude some valid suits.

In recent weeks, I have heard from many victims of defective products whose efforts to recover compensation would have been frustrated by this bill. I have heard from a woman who would not have received full compensatory damages under this bill for the death of a child because one wrongdoer could not pay his portion of the judgment. I have heard from women whose suits against makers of defective contraceptive devices—and the punitive damages awarded in those suits—forced the products off the market, in a way that this bill's cap on punitives would make much harder. I have heard from persons injured by products more than 15 years old, who under this bill could not bring suit at all.

Injured people cannot be left to suffer in this fashion; furthermore, the few companies that cause these injuries cannot be left, through lack of a deterrent, to engage in misconduct. I therefore must return the bill that has been presented to me. This bill would undermine the ability of courts to provide relief to victims of harmful products and thereby endanger the health and safety of the entire American public. There is nothing common sense about such reforms to product liability law.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
May 2, 1996.

### **Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters**

*May 2, 1996*

#### **Budget Negotiations**

**The President.** I'd like to make a couple of brief opening remarks, and then I'd like to let Senator Chafee and Senator Breaux say whatever they'd like to say. And then after

the meeting, after we've had a chance to visit, I may want to say some other things. But I'd like to say less of and more now, and perhaps more afterward.

First, I want to thank this group of Senators for coming to the White House. This has been a good day for our country. We've got some good economic news. We found that the American economy is continuing to grow steadily and without inflation and better than had been expected. But even though we have over 8 million jobs and low inflation and strong growth, we know that if we want to continue this we have got to finish the work of balancing the budget, and we have to do it in 7 years and in a bipartisan way.

In a very real sense for the next several months we will have to face the choice in more than one area between partisanship and progress. But if you look at what has happened in this Congress that is really good, and a lot has happened that is good—the telecommunications bill, the antiterrorism bill, the budget bill that I signed just a few days ago, the lobby reform bill; in the Senate, the passage of 100 to nothing of the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill, and then the passage, I think 97 to 3, just before you came over here, of the immigration bill sponsored by Senator Simpson—in every case these things have happened because there was bipartisan cooperation, the people put the interest of the country first.

That is what works. And that is what we're going to have to do to with this budget. So I'm proud to be here with these Senators today. I commend them for what they are doing. I hope it will become the model for what Congress does on this, and I hope it will bring us to a genuinely bipartisan balanced budget. And I'm encouraged, and I'm anxious to get down to the discussion.

Senator Chafee?

**Senator Chafee.** Well, thank you first, Mr. President. Thank you very much for inviting us down. We appreciate that. This whole group—Senator Dole has invited us to meet with him in a similar fashion next Tuesday, and we all intend to do that, likewise. This is truly a bipartisan group, as you have mentioned.

We are brought together by a desire to get a balanced budget, not just in the 7th

year, but in the out-years likewise. And we feel very strong. This is not a negotiating group. We're not negotiators on behalf of anybody in the Congress. We have come up with a plan, a bipartisan plan, which we've arrived at after considerable effort, and I want to commend Senator Breau and all who are associated with him. We think there's a very, very fair budget proposal that we've worked out. And we commend it to you, and we'll have a chance to present it in greater detail as we proceed.

**Senator Breau.** Mr. President, we're delighted to be here at your invitation to meet with you and to present what I think is very unique. This is truly a very unique coalition of 11 Democrats working together with 11 Republicans who have come together to present to you and to the administration and to our colleagues a 7-year balanced budget which brings about real reform in areas of welfare and Medicaid and Medicare, as well as a tax cut for individuals and working families.

We think that working from the center out is the way to solve these problems. We've had 2 Government partial shutdowns last year and 13 continuing resolutions. That's not the way to balance the budget. We offer this as a hopeful suggestion as the way we should go about getting it down.

**The President.** Thank you very much.

**Q.** Senators Breau and Chafee, will you have a cut in the gas tax as a part of your plan to balance the budget?

**Senator Breau.** That's not part of our plan.

**Senator Chafee.** That's not part of this plan.

**Q.** Any tax cuts at all as part of this—

**Senator Chafee.** Yes, we have a tax cut proposal in our plan.

**Q.** Can you tell us more about the Medicare and welfare proposals?

**Senator Chafee.** Well, I don't think we want to get into this in piecemeal.

**The President.** We'll all have more to say. We want to talk first.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

**Statement on Senate Action on the  
“Immigration Control and Financial  
Responsibility Act of 1996”**

*May 2, 1996*

The Senate has taken an important step today by passing with bipartisan support the Immigration Control and Financial Responsibility Act of 1996, important legislation which ratifies my administration's comprehensive immigration strategy to reverse decades of neglect and restore the rule of law to our immigration system.

This bill builds upon the historic progress we are making. Over the last 3 years, I have directed my administration to use every tool at its disposal to crack down on illegal immigration and to reintroduce the rule of law at the border and in the workplace. We have made illegal crossings at the Southwest border tougher than ever before by increasing manpower by 50 percent and employing state-of-the-art technology. We are deporting record numbers of criminal and other illegal aliens from the United States, and we have put teeth into our immigration laws in the workplace. Earlier this year, I signed an Executive order barring employers who knowingly hire illegal workers from receiving Federal contracts.

I am pleased that the Senate has endorsed our strategy with legislation that answers my administration's call for tougher penalties for alien smugglers, criminal aliens, and manufacturers and sellers of fraudulent documents. The Senate bill also supports our plan to continue to increase the size of our Border Patrol and provides the Justice Department with new tools to fight illegal immigration. While this bill strongly supports our enforcement efforts, it still goes too far in denying legal immigrants access to vital safety net programs which could jeopardize public health and safety. Some work still needs to be done. I urge the Congress to move quickly to finalize and send me this key legislation.

**Statement on the Initiative To  
Reduce Tobacco Use**

*May 2, 1996*

Smoking is a pediatric disease that shows no sign of abating, in part because young people are constantly barraged by messages that glamour and grit can be found in pack of cigarettes.

My administration has proposed the Nation's first comprehensive initiative to reduce children's use of tobacco products. But Government cannot solve this problem alone. Everybody must do their share to help parents keep their kids tobacco-free.

I applaud 3M Media for accepting responsibility for the impact billboards have. We must all work together to protect our children from the lures of tobacco.

**Statement on Senate Passage of the  
Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS  
Resources Emergency Act**

*May 2, 1996*

I applaud the Members of Congress for this overwhelming statement of support for the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act. By extending this vital program for 5 additional years, lawmakers of both parties are sending a message of support to thousands of Americans who are living with HIV or AIDS and to their families and friends who offer them love and support each and every day. In its first 5 years of existence, the Ryan White CARE Act has provided high-quality medical care and support services that help to extend the length and improve the quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS. I have been proud of our recent success in increasing funding for this program by more than 110 percent in the last 3 years, including a \$105 million increase in the recently enacted budget agreement for fiscal year 1996. I look forward to signing this bill and continuing this record of bipartisan support.